



## **ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Policy on Social Media and Use of IT**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and councillors.

Section 1 of this policy sets out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff, volunteers and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

Section 2 sets out the correct use of the council's computers, and the internet and email systems. It demonstrates how the organisation will comply with the Computers Misuse Act 1990 & General Data Protection Act 201 and how it will protect its systems and the data on them.

#### **SECTION 1 - SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media is used here as a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include, but are not limited to:

- Parish Council Website
- Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication. The principles of this policy apply to parish councillors, volunteers and council staff and to others communicating with the Parish Council. The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.

The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Individual parish councillors, volunteers and council staff are responsible for what they post in a council and personal capacity. In the main, councillors, volunteers and council staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities

**Clerk:** Trevor Thorpe, 82 Fermor Way, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 3BJ

**Tel:** 01892 664245. Email: [Clerk@rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:Clerk@rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk)

**Parish Council Website:** [www.rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk) **Twitter** @rotherfieldpc and on Facebook



## Working for the Community in Rotherfield, Mark Cross, Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

- Publish good news stories linked website or press pages
- Advertise vacancies
- Retweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information
- Post or share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Refer resident queries to the Clerk

### SECTION 2 - CORRECT USE OF THE COUNCIL'S COMPUTERS

When using social media (including email) parish councillors, volunteers and council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative. Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative. Parish councillors, volunteers and council staff must not:

- hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- present personal opinions as those of the council
- present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the council
- post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council
- post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
- publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- post any information that infringes the copyright of others
- post any information that may be deemed libel
- post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
- bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
- post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

Publishing untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and a fine for damages. This also applies if someone else publishes something libellous on your social media site. A successful libel claim will result in an award of damages against you.

All Councillors will use a Parish Council email address with a **rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk** suffix.

**Clerk:** Trevor Thorpe, 82 Fermor Way, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 3BJ

**Tel:** 01892 664245. Email: [Clerk@rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:Clerk@rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk)

**Parish Council Website:** [www.rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk) **Twitter** @rotherfieldpc and on Facebook